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DE RUEHUB #0008/01 0061727

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FM USINT HAVANA

TO RHEFHLC/HQ DHS WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5069

RHMFIIU/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE

RUCOWCV/CCGDSEVEN MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE

RHMFIS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHMFIIU/FAA NATIONAL HQ WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHMFIIU/US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PRO WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHMFIIU/FBI WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 000008

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CCA AND WHA/PD

DHS FOR OIA/LMIZELL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAIR](#) [PGOV](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: CUBA AGHAST ABOUT LANDING IN FLIGHT SCREENING LIST

REF: REF: ZUNIGA-FARRAR E-MAILS 1/5/10

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. The Government of Cuba (GOC) complained about reports that it had been included on the list of countries whose nationals would require additional screening before flying to the United States. Moreover, the GOC said that it was in the dark about the extent and application of the new screening procedures, stating that all it knew had come from international press reports. Foreign Ministry officials lamented that Cuba's inclusion was unfair and hostile, in light of the GOC's anti-terrorism cooperation with the rest of the world and the United States. The U.S. Interests Section (USINT) explained that the measures were not aimed particularly at Cuba, and promised to share with the GOC the latest on the new procedures as soon as it is received. USINT requests urgently information from Washington on the new screening measures and timetable for implementation. END SUMMARY.

"WE DON'T BELONG THERE"

12. (SBU) On January 5, 2009 officials from Cuba's Foreign Affairs Ministry (MINREX) presented a note to USINT COM and Pol/Econ Chief to protest its inclusion in the list of countries whose flights and nationals would be subject to increased screening. The officials complained that Cuba "didn't belong in that group" of countries, especially given its strong stance against Islamic terrorism in particular. Noting that Cuba had been one of the first countries to condemn the 9/11 attacks and offer assistance in the aftermath, and its willingness to cooperate on law enforcement with the United States, the Minrex functionaries said that the decision to include Cuba was "unfair," "hostile" and "humiliating."

13. (SBU) Cuba's mission in Washington delivered the same message to WHA/CCA. Following both meetings, the Minrex officials in Havana issued a statement to the international press, complaining about the measures. (Note: the tone of the meeting in Havana was businesslike and included productive discussions on other issues, including an offer to extend law enforcement cooperation.)

IN THE DARK

¶4. (SBU) The GOC officials complained that they were in the dark about what the new procedures entailed, saying that they had been unable to obtain any information from U.S. officials or even from the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) website. The Minrex officials were particularly concerned about the applicability of new procedures to third-country nationals transiting through Cuba, Cuban nationals transiting through third countries, and Cuba's diplomats visiting the United States. At the meeting with USINT officials, the GOC representatives seemed unsure about the fate of the growing flow of charter flights between Cuba and the United States.

UNSURE OURSELVES  
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¶5. (SBU) USINT COM acknowledged that the Mission had scant information itself about the new procedures, while assuring the Cubans that the measures were to combat terrorism and were not political or aimed at interrupting charter flights to and from Cuba. We promised to share information with the GOC as soon as we receive it, hopefully before the end of the week.

ACTION REQUEST  
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¶6. (SBU) USINT requests information on the new TSA measures and timetable for implementation which we can discuss with the GOC. We understand (Ref) that State has requested informally information from TSA. The lack of information

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thus far has stirred a frenzy of press speculation, created uncertainty amongst the U.S. air charter companies, and riled the GOC. Prompt guidance from Washington on what action we seek would help us to promote aviation security and manage the broader fallout over this issue.

FARRAR